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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [IZ](#) [SA](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER TERRORISM](#) [TERFIN](#)

SUBJECT: FBI DIRECTOR MEETS WITH PRESIDENT SALEH, MINISTER OF INTERIOR, AND PSO DIRECTOR

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull, for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (S/NF) Begin summary: FBI Director Mueller met with President Saleh on Monday, June 2 during a brief visit to Aden. Mueller and his delegation also met with Minister of Interior Rashad Alimi and head of the Political Security Organization (PSO) General Galeb Gamish. Issues discussed in these meetings included:

- The role of the new LEGATT Office in Sanaa in facilitating CT cooperation
- The importance of continued liaison and CT cooperation
- The return of Yemeni detainees at GTMO
- ROYG re-education of "former" Al-Qaeda members
- The smuggling of weapons and explosives from Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq
- USS Cole Escapees
- U.S. efforts to extradite Yemeni cleric Mohammed Ali Al-Moayed from Germany
- ROYG requests for assistance: equipment, training, etc.

2. (C) Also in attendance: Ambassador Edmund Hull, FBI Executive Assistant Director for Counterterrorism Pat D'Amuro, in-coming LEGATT Stephen Gaudin, and Mueller's Counselor Jonathan Solomon. End summary.

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Overview  
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3. (S/NF) Director Mueller arrived in Aden on June 2 as part of a larger regional tour. The Director met with Ambassador Hull upon arrival to discuss agenda items for the Director's meeting with President Saleh. Arriving in Yemen from Saudi Arabia, the Director was able to provide a valuable assessment of the current situation there. He noted SAG's renewed activism in the fight against terror and their concern about the transfer of weapons and explosives from Yemen -- specifically from the weapons souk in Saada. SAG also provided the Director with a list of items confiscated during illegal border crossings from Yemen that was mentioned, but not delivered, to President Saleh.

4. (S/NF) Ambassador highlighted intelligence indicating that a Saudi based group tried to recruit Abu Assem (Al-Makki), number two on the U.S. most wanted list for Yemen, to conduct terrorist acts in Saudi, which Abu Assem declined. This is a warning and it should serve as a message to the Yemenis that these individuals must be apprehended.

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President Saleh and Director Mueller  
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5. (S/NF) Starting a cordial meeting with President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Director Mueller conveyed President Bush's thanks for continuing ROYG efforts, particularly the recent arrest of IIS agents. Mueller presented Stephen Gaudin to Saleh as the new Legal Attache-designate to Yemen, noting his years of experience in CT and his involvement in the East Africa Embassy bombings investigation. Gaudin's selection is evidence of the FBI's long-term commitment. The FBI will send additional personnel to support him, increasing the frequency and quality of its exchanges with the Political Security Organization (PSO) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Mueller also introduced Executive Assistant Director for Counterterrorism Pat D'Amuro. Based out of Washington, D'Amuro will be traveling throughout the region, including Yemen, to meet with his counterparts in the months ahead.

6. (S/NF) President Saleh welcomed Mueller and stressed his wish to enhance cooperation and coordination between the FBI, PSO, and MOI. He also noted the importance of information sharing to continue the joint efforts to arrest those responsible for terrorism and identify "sleeper" Al-Qaeda cells in Yemen.

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Return of Yemeni Detainees at GTMO  
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17. (S/NF) President Saleh cited the recent return of Saudi detainees from GTMO to SAG. He said that, when the U.S. investigation of Yemenis at GTMO is complete, they should be handed over to Yemen so ROYG can conduct their own investigation and perhaps uncover more sleeper cells. Saleh noted that, at the end of the day, the USG is not going to adopt tough measures against these individuals, but Yemen can. These people must be a burden to the U.S. and ROYG is only trying to help.

18. (S/NF) Mueller affirmed that USG authorities continue to look at the individuals at GTMO and will take appropriate steps when their investigations are complete. ROYG has had an opportunity to meet with Yemenis at GTMO.

19. (S/NF) Ambassador Hull added that there is a request for additional information from ROYG about some of the people in Yemeni custody.

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Al-Moayed  
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10. (S/NF) President Saleh noted that the USG wants to prosecute Sheikh Mohammed Ali al-Moayed, but ROYG considers him a businessman, not a terrorist. He suggested that the U.S. have the CIA and FBI investigate al-Moayed's activities, and, when the investigation is over, the U.S. should turn al-Moayed over to ROYG who will perform their own investigation.

11. (S/NF) Director Mueller assured President Saleh that significant evidence of links to terrorist financing has been collected against al-Moayed and the case against him is quite strong.

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Re-education of Former Al-Qaeda  
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12. (S/NF) Saleh outlined an ongoing ROYG initiative to re-educate former Al-Qaeda members. The goal is to get them to repent and pledge their loyalty to ROYG and the country. This program is being run through moderate religious clerics, and Saleh believes it will provide ROYG with valuable information that will lead to the apprehension of more people.

13. (S/NF) Mueller expressed concern that while these "reformed" individuals may promise not to commit terrorist attacks in Yemen, they may do so somewhere else. President Saleh assured that these individuals are not permitted to leave Yemen. Saleh noted that people with "blood on their hands" were not eligible for this program. He added that last Ramadan (Nov/Dec 2002) the ROYG released 36 "reformed" individuals who were all doing well, proof that ROYG's re-education -- a mixture of religion, culture, and education -- is working.

14. (S/NF) Saleh also said that the fact that nothing happened to Americans in Yemen during the war in Iraq was important evidence that ROYG's intervention, especially Saleh's personal intervention, was effective.

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Precarious Regional Security Situation; Saudi Factor  
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15. (S/NF) Comparing the lack of central control in Iraq to the situation in Yemen after the 1994 civil war, Saleh said the bombings in Saudi Arabia were due in part to the flow of arms out of Iraq. Director Mueller countered with the Saudi theory that the weapons used in these attacks actually came from Yemen. While noting that it was a possibility, Saleh asked why the Saudis fail to control their own borders, including the Yemeni one.

16. (S/NF) Mueller noted that the question of Saudis controlling their borders is a separate issue from the ability to buy weapons -- RPGs, explosives, etc. -- from Yemen. Saleh mentioned ROYG's weapons-buyback program -- in the last few months ROYG says they have bought-back about 70-80% of the weapons from the souks -- but again cited instability in Iraq as an immediate threat. Saleh said that weapons dealers in Yemen have been trying to get permission to go to Iraq because the weapons there are cheaper. Saleh also noted that members of the "former Iraqi regime" were now selling weapons and munitions to Al-Qaeda, although he gave no sources.

17. (S/NF) Saleh later agreed with the Director and the Saudis on proliferation from Saada (a northern city with a

large weapons souk), confirming that ROYG knows the explosives used against the Cole and explosives used to target Saleh's residence were from Saada.

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CT Cooperation and Training  
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118. (S/NF) Saleh said that while cooperation with CIA is good, cooperation with FBI is only fair; the ROYG has needs that should be discussed. Mueller said that is why Steve Gaudin has been assigned to Yemen for the next two years as the first Legal Attache permanently assignment to Yemen. Mueller also noted that the FBI will conduct a two week course on crime scene investigation, evidence collection, etc. at the end of July for 24 Yemeni officials. Equipment, which the officials will retain, will also be provided.

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Sidebar: President Saleh and Director Mueller One-on-One  
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119. (S/NF) At the conclusion of the delegation's meeting with the President, Saleh dismissed everyone except Director Mueller (and the President's interpreter) to have a private exchange. During this sidebar, Saleh informed the Director that ROYG has information indicating that disaffected Iraqis are contacting elements of al-Qaeda to plot against U.S. interests. No details or sourcing were provided.

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USS Cole Escapees  
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120. (C) During a working lunch hosted by Minister of Interior Alimi and PSO Director Gamish, discussion continued on numerous issues including the April 11 escape of ten prisoners from a high-security prison facility in Aden. Four of the ten were implicated in the October 2000 attack against the USS Cole.

121. (C) PSO Security Director Gamish noted that they have proved difficult to find, but the investigation continues. ROYG distributed names and photos of the escapees, there is a reward, and ROYG is trying to find their hideouts. President Saleh and Gamish both commented that intel indicates the escapees are still in Yemen.

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Requests for Assistance and New CT Unit  
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122. (C) Both Alimi and Gamish had a list of items their respective organizations require to improve their effectiveness, including computers, crime scene processing kits, and magnetometers. Alimi also announced the establishment of a new CT Unit as called for by a recent Arab League ruling. ROYG has given this unit a site, but the unit will require training and equipment before it is fully operational.

123. (C) Director Mueller suggested that the U.S. has found small vetted units to be more effective than large divisions. He added that those who receive specialized training must use it (i.e. no good to train people and then transfer them to a unit where they don't use that skill). Alimi agreed and noted that personnel selection is key; however, ROYG needs larger units to ensure that qualified individuals are available when they are needed. Gamish explained that turnover is high due in part to the importance of family. If a family member is needed at home or elsewhere, they will go.

124. (C) Ambassador Hull noted the importance of maintaining these skills with periodic exercises.

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Press Coverage  
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125. (C) Press coverage of the Director's visit was limited, but positive, highlighting increased bilateral cooperation and USG appreciation for ROYG's efforts to combat terrorism. (Note: Many weekly papers have not yet published.)

126. (U) Text of the Embassy's official press release:

(Begin text.)

FBI Director Mueller Visits Yemen; Meets President Saleh

Robert Mueller, Director of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, met with Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Aden Monday to discuss counter-terrorism and legal cooperation.

Director Mueller's brief stopover in Aden came as part of his tour of the countries in the region to discuss the global struggle against terrorism. Director Mueller briefed President Saleh on his talks with Saudi officials regarding the latest terrorist attacks in Riyadh that left more than thirty people dead. He also underlined the existing close security cooperation between the United States and Yemen, and expressed the hope that the relationship would continue and develop further. In this regard, he told President Saleh about the establishment of a LEGATT (Legal Attache) office at the U.S. mission in Sanaa.

Also, attending the meeting in Aden were Yemeni Interior Minister Alimi and PSO Chief General Ghamesh as well as U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Edmund Hull.  
(End text.)  
MISENHEIMER